Mayiladumparai – Krishnagiri, 2172 BCE Iron Age AMS Date (2022), Neolithic–Iron Age Transition, Rock Paintings & K. Rajan Excavation | TNPSC Notes

TNPSC Notes · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/mayiladumparai/en

Mayiladumparai is a **habitation-cum-burial** archaeological site in Krishnagiri district. From the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology's excavations of 2021 and 2022, two samples were dated by **AMS radiocarbon dating** at **Beta Analytic**, Florida (USA), to **2172 BCE and 1615 BCE**. On this basis the then Chief Minister M.K. Stalin told the Assembly on **9 May 2022** that the Iron Age in Tamil Nadu began about **4,200 years ago (around 2200 BCE)**. At that time, **according to the State Department of Archaeology**, it was the oldest of the AMS-dated Iron Age sites in India. Later, the January 2025 report "Antiquity of Iron" announced an even earlier date (3345 BCE) for Sivakalai. These are dates announced by the State; scholars and the Department's own officials say more evidence is needed – in answers, write "according to the State Department of Archaeology".

தமிழில் படிக்க

These notes are written for TNPSC Group 1, 2/2A and 4 aspirants. Mayiladumparai belongs to **History, Culture, Heritage of Tamil Nadu** (archaeological discoveries), **History of India** (prehistory – Neolithic, Iron Age, megalithic culture) and **Current Events** (the 2022 announcement, the 2025 Antiquity of Iron report). "2172 BCE – Mayiladumparai – Krishnagiri" is the key pair. For an overview see Porunai civilisation and Tamil Nadu excavation sites; for the Antiquity of Iron report see Sivakalai.

Mayiladumparai at a Glance

Aspect	Details
Location	Krishnagiri district, north-western Tamil Nadu.
Type of site	Habitation + burials (habitation-cum-burial); rock shelters with paintings nearby.
First excavation	2003 – Prof. **K. Rajan** (then of Tamil University, Thanjavur).
State excavation	Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology – 2020-21 season (Phase 1), 2021-22 season (Phase 2).
Dating	AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) radiocarbon dating – Beta Analytic, Florida (USA); mid-range calibrated dates **2172 BCE and 1615 BCE**.
Announcement	9 May 2022 – statement in the Assembly by the then Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.
Report title	"Mayiladumparai – Beginning of Agrarian Society; 4,200-year-old Iron Age Culture in Tamil Nadu".

Cultural sequence	Five: Microlithic → Neolithic → Iron Age → Early Historic → Historic.

The Dating – What Was Claimed

- **Two AMS dates:** 2172 BCE and 1615 BCE – from layers of the introduction of iron and the transition from the Neolithic to the Iron Age.
- **Conclusion:** the State Department announced that the use of iron in Tamil Nadu began around 2200 BCE (4,200 years ago).
- **Earlier record:** the previous oldest iron date in Tamil Nadu was from **Mangadu** in Mettur taluk, Salem district (1510 BCE). Mayiladumparai pushed this back by about six to seven centuries.
- **All-India comparison (as per the report):** India's earliest AMS iron date until then was **Brahmagiri**, Karnataka (2040 BCE); Mayiladumparai was announced as the oldest of 28 AMS-dated Iron Age sites in India.
- **Neolithic:** a cultural deposit 25 cm below the dated level shows that a **late Neolithic phase existed before 2200 BCE**.
- **Black-and-red ware:** pottery thought to belong to the Iron Age was already in use in the late Neolithic, the report says.
- **Supporting evidence:** the Chief Minister said that, taken with evidence from Mangadu and Thelunganur (Mettur taluk, Salem), iron was introduced 4,200 years ago.

Rock Paintings

- **Three rock shelters** near the site have paintings in white and red pigments.
- White paintings are drawn over the red ones, so the report treats **the red paintings as earlier**.
- As no habitation material was found in the shelters, the paintings may have been made on special occasions.

"Antiquity of Iron" – What Followed

Year	Event
2003	K. Rajan – first excavation at Mayiladumparai
2020-21, 2021-22	State Archaeology Department excavation – Phases 1 and 2
9 May 2022	2172 BCE / 1615 BCE dates announced in the Assembly; "4,200-year-old Iron Age"
January 2025	Report "Antiquity of Iron" released – dates up to 3345 BCE for iron from Sivakalai; the Mayiladumparai dates were cited as supporting evidence.

- **Caution:** these dates were announced by the State Department of Archaeology. In 2022 the Department's own Commissioner said "we need more evidence", and many scholars urge caution in drawing conclusions from a few dates at one site. In the exam, "according to the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology" is the right way to write it.

Background: Neolithic and Iron Age in South India

Period	Features	Tamil Nadu sites (e.g.)
Microlithic	Small stone tools; hunting and gathering.	Mayiladumparai (lowest layer)
Neolithic	Polished stone axes, cattle-keeping, early farming.	Mayiladumparai, Paiyampalli (Tirupattur district)
Iron Age / Megalithic	Iron tools, black-and-red ware, burials such as urns, stone circles and dolmens.	Mayiladumparai, Adichanallur, Sivakalai, Kodumanal
Early Historic	Towns, Tamil-Brahmi writing, trade – the Sangam age.	Keeladi, Korkai, Arikamedu

- **"Beginning of agrarian society":** as the report's title says, iron tools helped clear forests and made settled farming possible – the base of the later Sangam society.
- **Archaeological richness of Krishnagiri:** an Iron Age dolmen about 3,500 years old at Mallachandram (Policy Note 2024-25); first-phase excavation at Sennanur in 2024.

Tamil Nadu Angle and Exam Angle

- **Tamil Nadu angle:** a key site showing a continuous change from the Neolithic to the Iron Age on the uplands of north-western Tamil Nadu (Krishnagiri–Dharmapuri–Salem).
- **Prelims:** district (Krishnagiri), date (2172 BCE), laboratory (Beta Analytic, Florida), method (AMS), date of announcement (9 May 2022).
- **Mains:** for questions such as "scientific evidence of Tamil antiquity" or "Iron Age in Tamil Nadu", combine Mayiladumparai, Sivakalai and Adichanallur.
- **Way forward:** more samples in several laboratories, metallurgical study, publication in peer-reviewed journals, site protection.

Writing Mains Answers (Group 1 / Group 2)

Significance of the Mayiladumparai excavation (about 150–200 words)

- **Introduction:** Krishnagiri; habitation-cum-burial site; K. Rajan 2003; State Department 2021–22.
- **Dating:** AMS – 2172 and 1615 BCE (Beta Analytic); announced 9 May 2022.
- **Findings:** Iron Age about 2200 BCE; Neolithic before that; black-and-red ware already in the late Neolithic; five cultural layers; rock paintings.
- **Comparison:** Mangadu 1510 BCE; Brahmagiri 2040 BCE; later Sivakalai 3345 BCE (2025).
- **Conclusion:** evidence that rewrites Tamil Nadu's Iron Age chronology; needs further scientific confirmation.

Practice: Match the Following

Item	Match
Mayiladumparai	Krishnagiri – 2172 BCE

Mangadu	Salem (Mettur) – 1510 BCE
Brahmagiri	Karnataka – 2040 BCE
Sivakalai	Thoothukudi – 3345 BCE (2025 report)
Beta Analytic	Florida – AMS laboratory
K. Rajan	Mayiladumparai excavation, 2003

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Mayiladumparai is in **Krishnagiri** district – not Mayiladuthurai district (the names look alike).
- 2172 BCE = Mayiladumparai; 3345 BCE = Sivakalai (2025); 1155 BCE = Sivakalai paddy (2021).
- The announcement was in 2022 (9 May); the excavations were in 2021 and 2022 – keep them apart.
- "India's oldest iron" was the State Department's claim as of 2022; in 2025 Sivakalai was announced with an earlier date.
- The laboratory was Beta Analytic (USA) – not TIFR (TIFR = Korkai, 1968–69).

Key Terms – Tamil / English (for the bilingual paper)

Tamil	English
புதிய கற்காலம்	Neolithic
நுண்கற்காலம்	Microlithic
இரும்புக்காலம்	Iron Age
பெருங்கற்காலம்	Megalithic period
கருப்பு-சிவப்பு மட்பாண்டம்	Black-and-red ware
பாறை மறைவிடம்	Rock shelter
முடுக்கி நிறை நிறமாலையியல்	Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)
அளவுத்திருத்தக் காலம்	Calibrated date

Quick Revision Table

Period / year	Event
Before 2200 BCE	Late Neolithic
2172 BCE	Mayiladumparai AMS date 1
2040 BCE	Brahmagiri (earlier Indian AMS iron date)
1615 BCE	Mayiladumparai AMS date 2
1510 BCE	Mangadu (earlier Tamil Nadu iron date)

2003	K. Rajan's excavation
2021, 2022	State Department excavation
9 May 2022	Announcement in the Assembly
January 2025	Antiquity of Iron report (Sivakalai 3345 BCE)

TNPSC Key Points (PYQ-style facts)

- Mayiladumparai – Krishnagiri district; habitation-cum-burial site.
- AMS dates: 2172 BCE and 1615 BCE; Beta Analytic, Florida.
- Iron Age in Tamil Nadu about 4,200 years ago – State Department announcement, 9 May 2022.
- Five cultural layers: Microlithic to Historic.
- White and red paintings in three rock shelters.
- First excavation: K. Rajan, 2003.

Related notes: Porunai civilisation and TN excavation sites, Sivakalai, Adichanallur, Kodumanal.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is Mayiladumparai?

In Krishnagiri district. It is a habitation-cum-burial archaeological site with painted rock shelters nearby. Do not confuse it with Mayiladuthurai district.

How was the 2172 BCE date of Mayiladumparai obtained?

Two samples from the State Archaeology Department's excavation were dated by AMS radiocarbon dating at Beta Analytic, Florida (USA), to 2172 BCE and 1615 BCE.

When and by whom was the Mayiladumparai date announced?

The then Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced it in the Assembly on 9 May 2022. The State Department said the Iron Age in Tamil Nadu began about 4,200 years ago (around 2200 BCE).

Is Mayiladumparai still the oldest Iron Age site in India?

It was announced as such in 2022. But the "Antiquity of Iron" report of January 2025 announced dates up to 3345 BCE for Sivakalai. Both are State Department announcements; scholars say more evidence is needed.

What does the Mayiladumparai excavation say about the Neolithic?

Because another cultural layer lies 25 cm below the dated level, a late Neolithic phase existed before 2200 BCE; the report also says black-and-red ware was already in use then.

Practise this topic with our free Tamil quizzes, follow daily current affairs (English) and Tamil current affairs, and see our TNPSC PYQ books such as the General Tamil PYQ book and the Tamil Nadu Administration PYQ book. For classroom and online TNPSC coaching at Gandhipuram, Coimbatore and

Anna Nagar, Madurai, see our TNPSC course page or call 99941 46662 (Coimbatore) / 73059 47122 (Madurai).

Frequently asked questions

Where is Mayiladumparai?
In Krishnagiri district. It is a habitation-cum-burial archaeological site with painted rock shelters nearby. Do not confuse it with Mayiladuthurai district.

How was the 2172 BCE date of Mayiladumparai obtained?
Two samples from the State Archaeology Department's excavation were dated by AMS radiocarbon dating at Beta Analytic, Florida (USA), to 2172 BCE and 1615 BCE.

When and by whom was the Mayiladumparai date announced?
The then Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced it in the Assembly on 9 May 2022. The State Department said the Iron Age in Tamil Nadu began about 4,200 years ago (around 2200 BCE).

Is Mayiladumparai still the oldest Iron Age site in India?
It was announced as such in 2022. But the "Antiquity of Iron" report of January 2025 announced dates up to 3345 BCE for Sivakalai. Both are State Department announcements; scholars say more evidence is needed.

What does the Mayiladumparai excavation say about the Neolithic?
Because another cultural layer lies 25 cm below the dated level, a late Neolithic phase existed before 2200 BCE; the report also says black-and-red ware was already in use then.

Practice questions

1. In which district is Mayiladumparai?

A. Krishnagiri
B. Mayiladuthurai
C. Dharmapuri
D. Salem

2. What is the oldest AMS date from Mayiladumparai?

A. 3345 BCE
B. 2172 BCE
C. 1615 BCE
D. 1155 BCE

3. Which laboratory dated the Mayiladumparai samples?

A. TIFR, Mumbai
B. BSIP, Lucknow
C. Beta Analytic, Florida
D. PRL, Ahmedabad

SHANMUGAM IAS

4. On which date was the Mayiladumparai dating announced in the Assembly?

A. 13 February 2021
B. 9 September 2021
C. 23 January 2025
D. 9 May 2022

5. According to the Mayiladumparai announcement, how many years ago did the Iron Age begin in Tamil Nadu?

A. About 4,200
B. About 3,200
C. About 2,600
D. About 5,300

6. Who first excavated Mayiladumparai in 2003?

A. Amarnath Ramakrishna
B. K. Rajan
C. R. Nagaswamy
D. Iravatham Mahadevan

7. Before Mayiladumparai, the oldest iron date in Tamil Nadu (1510 BCE) was from which site?

A. Adichanallur
B. Kodumanal
C. Mangadu
D. Keeladi

8. As per the Mayiladumparai report, India's earliest AMS iron date until then (2040 BCE) was from which site?

A. Hallur
B. Maski
C. Paiyampalli
D. Brahmagiri

9. How many cultural sequences were identified at Mayiladumparai?

A. Five
B. Four
C. Three
D. Six

10. According to the Mayiladumparai report, when did black-and-red ware come into use?

A. In the Sangam age
B. In the late Neolithic
C. In the Chola period
D. In the Historic period

SHANMUGAM IA

11. How far below the dated level does the Neolithic deposit lie at Mayiladumparai?

A. 5 cm
B. 75 cm
C. 25 cm
D. 1.28 m

12. Near Mayiladumparai, paintings occur in how many rock shelters?

A. One
B. Seven
C. Five
D. Three

13. Which Mayiladumparai paintings are earlier?

A. Red
B. White
C. Black
D. Yellow

14. Which method was used to date Mayiladumparai?

A. Thermoluminescence (TL)
B. AMS radiocarbon dating
C. Dendrochronology
D. Potassium-argon

15. When was the "Antiquity of Iron" report released?

A. May 2022
B. December 2023
C. January 2025
D. September 2025

16. Which phrase appears in the title of the Mayiladumparai report?

A. City of Temples
B. Cradle of Civilisation
C. Land of Pearls
D. Beginning of Agrarian Society

17. Which Mettur-taluk sites were cited along with Mayiladumparai?

A. Mangadu, Thelunganur
B. Keeladi, Konthagai
C. Sivakalai, Korkai
D. Kodumanal, Alagankulam

18. Statements: (1) Mayiladumparai is a habitation-cum-burial site. (2) Its dates were obtained at TIFR. Which is correct?

A. 2 only
B. 1 only
C. Both
D. Neither

SHANMUGAM IA

19. Which were the State excavation seasons at Mayiladumparai?

A. 2014-15, 2015-16

B. 2023-24, 2024-25

C. 2020-21, 2021-22

D. 1968-69, 2003

20. How did iron tools help early agrarian society?

A. They stopped sea trade

B. They introduced coins

C. They created writing

D. They helped clear forests for settled farming

Answers with explanations

1. A) Krishnagiri – Krishnagiri district.

2. B) 2172 BCE – 2172 BCE; the other is 1615 BCE.

3. C) Beta Analytic, Florida – Beta Analytic, USA.

4. D) 9 May 2022 – 9 May 2022.

5. A) About 4,200 – About 4,200 years (2200 BCE).

6. B) K. Rajan – K. Rajan, Tamil University.

7. C) Mangadu – Mangadu, Mettur taluk, Salem.

8. D) Brahmagiri – Brahmagiri, Karnataka.

9. A) Five – Five, from Microlithic to Historic.

10. B) In the late Neolithic – Before the Iron Age – in the late Neolithic.

11. C) 25 cm – 25 cm below – Neolithic before 2200 BCE.

12. D) Three – Three; white and red pigments.

13. A) Red – White is drawn over the red.

14. B) AMS radiocarbon dating – Accelerator Mass Spectrometry radiocarbon dating.

15. C) January 2025 – January 2025 – Sivakalai 3345 BCE.

16. D) Beginning of Agrarian Society – "Beginning of Agrarian Society; 4,200-year-old Iron Age Culture in Tamil Nadu".

17. A) Mangadu, Thelunganur – Mangadu and Thelunganur, Salem district.

18. B) 1 only – The laboratory was Beta Analytic, not TIFR.

19. C) 2020-21, 2021-22 – 2020-21 (Phase 1), 2021-22 (Phase 2).

SHANMUGAM IA

20. D) They helped clear forests for settled farming – Report title: "Beginning of Agrarian Society".

Shanmugam IAS Academy – next step

- **Classes:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS, Bank, SSC, SI – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, General Tamil complete book, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **More free PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · This page: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/mayiladumparai/en

Admissions / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in

SHANMUGAM IA